



The 5 Minute Game Plan

A Catechesis Supplement for Youth Sports

8th Grade - Winter Edition

Created by Peter Piscitello, Executive Director, CYO of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

August 1, 2013

Dear CYO Coaches,

Greetings and welcome to a new year of CYO Sports! We're thrilled you have taken the time out of your busy schedule to be involved in such a fantastic ministry; by coaching our youth and helping them to develop as persons and athletes, you are making an impact that is larger than you probably even imagine. We sincerely appreciate your efforts to this end and look forward to working with you in the coming season.

The most important part of developing any child is helping that child to grow in his or her relationship with God. With that in mind, we have created the enclosed materials. Titled *The 5 Minute Game Plan*, the goal is for this to be exactly that: a 5-10 minute supplement to CYO practices that creates a curriculum for faith formation in our CYO. We have worked our Archdiocesan schools and School of Religion programs to create a program that supplements the specific themes and curriculum addressed in your child's primary faith formation. Of course, we have also taken into account that their primary formation begins at home. On this page and the one that follows, I will provide an overview of your role as a coach, and instructions on how to implement this new requirement within your team.

First, a quick word of encouragement. We understand that the majority of our parents weren't theology majors or may not even be comfortable praying in front of a group of children. I can assure you that this program has been developed so that it can be implemented by anyone. Simply follow these instructions and you will be on your way to a truly fulfilling addition to practice each week. It's as simple as following each week's lesson in this packet.

As you may have already noticed, this packet is split into a couple of parts. First you will find an overview of the entire year that includes the theme, scripture and saint for each week. Then you will find the individual "lessons." The requirement is simple: at your team's first practice of each week, you will need to begin practice with the lesson for that week. Lessons begin with the second week of preseason and go until the end of the season for each sport. Within each lesson, you will find the following:

- Theme: based on age-appropriate themes from school and religious education curriculum
- Scripture: a weekly scripture passage based on the theme
- Saint or Topic: a relevant Saint or topic that helps convey the scripture and theme
- Discussion Question: 1-2 Questions that help connect the theme to individual and team
- Practice Plan: A tip for coaches on how to make this theme come alive during practice
- Prayer: A prayer that will close the lesson and lead into practice
- Post-Practice Prayer: A simple reminder of the week's theme and closing prayer

That's it, a full lesson that should take 5-10 minutes depending on discussion and is fully scripted. We also encourage you to involve the children by having them take turns reading the scripture each week and say the prayers. Either the head coach or assistant should usually lead the saint/topic and discussion, but you can simply read the material on the page. You can certainly take some time to prepare prior to practice if you desire, but the program is designed so that you can simply take the lesson to practice and use it without preparation. We have also

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encouraged parishes to adjust practice times so that this time is “added” to the allotted time and not a part of your hour or so of practice time. Remember that this only takes place at the first practice of each week, though following up during other practices that week is a great idea.

Again, we appreciate your time as a volunteer coach and your implementation of this new requirement. Our goal is not to add to anything to your already busy schedule, but rather to create a program that can be easily implemented each week to greatly enrich the spiritual element of practice and supplement a child’s primary faith formation curriculum. As you probably already understand, the impact that sports has on children is dramatic and can be very positive; by connecting sports to concrete topics from scripture and theology, we hope to draw parallels that can help transform lives and deepen the relationship each child has with God. We hope that you’ll find this process to be fruitful and rewarding for your children and you as a coach.

Of course, if you have any questions do not hesitate to contact your Athletic Director or our CYO Office. Our office can be reached at (913) 384-7377 or by email at admin@cyojwa.org. More information about this initiative, including lessons for all ages and seasons, is available online at www.cyojwa.org. Best wishes this season and know I will be praying for you and your team!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Piscitello". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "J".

Peter J Piscitello
Executive Director, CYO Year Outline

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Season and Practice Week Number



SAMPLE PLAN WITH INSTRUCTIONS

Fall Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: The Trinity
Scripture: 1 John 5:7-9

Read
aloud
by
coach
or
child

← Scripture length may differ based on curriculum in schools (if a specific verse is required in school, entire verse was generally placed here)

↗ "And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son."

Saintly Example: Saint Patrick ← Coach reads written script aloud to team.

Saint Patrick is most well known for his work teaching the people of Ireland about Jesus, but he also gave us important teachings about the Holy Trinity. When he was teaching people in Ireland, he used a local plant called a Shamrock to teach about the trinity. He showed that the Shamrock has three leaves, but is still one plant, just like the Holy Trinity has three persons (God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit) but is still one. The people of Ireland were so inspired by St. Patrick's teachings, they asked to be baptized and have carried their love of Jesus and Mary all over the world! St. Patrick was known as a courageous man who worked his entire life to help people grow closer to God and to know about the Holy Trinity.

Discussion: ← Read each bullet point aloud to generate discussion. Try to get 2-3 answers each or more if time and participation allows.

- Explain that the sign of the cross is a constant reminder of the Holy Trinity. As we say "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we remember that God is three persons and are praying that He will guide us in our prayer!
- St. Patrick used the shamrock to teach people about God, what are some ways that you can show that you believe and God and teach others about God at school and during our sports season?

↗ Coaches are encouraged to try to get different kids involved with discussion each week so that all are being included in discussions through year.

Practice Plan

- ↑
- Ask the kids to remember the Holy Trinity every time they make the sign of the cross and to think about ways they can help spread the gospel like St. Patrick did.

A tip or theme for the coach to consider in order to connect theme through practice. Don't read aloud.

Prayer

- ↑
- Jesus, we thank you for bringing us together as a team in this new season. We pray that during all our practices and games this year that we can put you first and remember you in all that we do. Help us to be safe and to have fun this year. We ask this as we pray together the Glory Be prayer: Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen.

Prayer can be read by coach or by child and ends "before practice" portion.

End of Practice: Remind kids about the example of St. Patrick and ask them to think about the Holy Trinity every time they make the sign of the cross. Say the following prayer to close practice: ← Reminder of theme by coach.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Patrick, Pray for us!

↗ Closing prayer read by coach or child.

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Year Outline

Fall Seasons

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Love **Scripture:** John 15:13, 17 **Saint:** None
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Mercy **Scripture:** Luke 6:35-36 **Saint:** St. Teresa of Avila
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Humility **Scripture:** Matthew 23:11-12 **Saint:** St. Ignatius of Loyola
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Anger **Scripture:** John 2:13-16 **Saint:** St. Jerome
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Agony **Scripture:** Luke 22:39-44 **Saint:** St. John of the Cross
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Forgiveness (Authority) **Scripture:** Mark 2:5-11 **Saint:** St. Maria Goretti
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Bread of Life **Scripture:** John 6:35-40 **Saint:** St. Justin Martyr
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Jesus as Shepherd **Scripture:** John 10:11-15 **Saint:** None (Jesus as the Good Shepherd)
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Jesus as Servant **Scripture:** Mark 10:43-45 **Saint:** None (Following Jesus' example of Service)
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Jesus as a Man of Prayer **Scripture:** Matthew 14:23 **Saint:** Intercessory Prayer and the Saints

Winter Seasons

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** The Sacrament of Confirmation **Scripture:** Ephesians 1:13 **Saint:** Confirmation Names and the Saints
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Gifts of the Holy Spirit **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 **Saint:** St. Ambrose
- Preseason Week 3 - **Theme:** Fruits of the Holy Spirit **Scripture:** Galatians 5:22-24 **Saint:** St. Jude
- Preseason Week 4 - **Theme:** Cardinal Virtues **Scripture:** Wisdom 8:7 **Saint:** St. Thomas Aquinas
- Preseason Week 5 - **Theme:** Service **Scripture:** Matthew 5:14-16 **Saint:** Saint Martha
- Preseason Week 6 - **Theme:** The Great Commission **Scripture:** Matthew 28:18-20 **Saint:** St. Peter
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Nicene Creed **Scripture:** John 14:1 **Saint:** St. Athanasius
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** First Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2041-2042 **Saint:** St. John Chrysostom
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Second Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2042 **Saint:** St. Pio of Pietrelcina
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Third Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2042 **Saint:** St. Ignatius of Antioch
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** Fourth Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2043 **Saint:** St. Peter Chrysologus
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** Fifth Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2043 **Saint:** St. Joseph
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** Sanctity of Life **Scripture:** Romans 13:9-10 **Saint:** None (The Angel Gabriel)
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** Living Vocations in the World **Scripture:** Colossians 3:5-6 **Saint:** St. Agnes
- Regular Season Week 9 - **Theme:** Church Teachings on Major Issues **Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:15-17 **Saint:** St. Albert the Great

Spring Seasons

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- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** Church History - Pentecost & Persecutions **Scripture:** Acts 8:1-3 **Saint:** St. James
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Church History - Middle Ages **Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:6-9 **Saint:** St. Dominic
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Church History - Reformation/Counter Reformation **Scripture:** Romans 8:31 **Saint:** St. Pius V
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Church History - Pre-Vatican/Post Vatican **Scripture:** Hebrews 13:8 **Saint:** Blessed John Paul II
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Local Church History **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 **Saint:** Edith Stein
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** The Church and New Media **Scripture:** Mark 16:15 **Saint:** Saint Francis de Sales

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Winter Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: The Sacrament of Confirmation

Scripture: Ephesians 1:13

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit

Confirmation Names and the Saints: As you prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation in this 8th grade year, you may have already chosen a confirmation name or considered which name to choose. Traditionally as a part of the Sacrament, each candidate chooses a Christian name to identify them. This can be your own name or another, with the most popular process being to use the name of a saint with special meaning to the individual or their family. There are thousands of options here, but the most important thing is that the candidate takes the time to learn of this name/saint and use that information to draw closer to Christ. For example, if your confirmation name is Catherine after St. Catherine of Siena, you should take this opportunity to learn about her life and what characteristics and miracles made her a saint. This will deepen your understanding of Christ and help you to draw closer to Him, as well as be able to call upon the intercession of this saint in times of need and in preparation for the sacrament.

Discussion:

- Have you chosen a Confirmation name yet? What name have you chosen or are you considering choosing and why? What special role does that name have and what do you know about the saint or biblical namesake?

Practice Plan: Encourage a devotion to the saints on your team. Early in the season, consider selecting a "patron saint" of your team, invoking that saint's name and praying to the saint for intercession as your team seeks to grow closer to God and have a fun experience this year. Take some time and have the children choose this saint together, then include him or her in prayer during the year at practices and games.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the example of your saints, who model for us the way to lead holy lives and witness to your love. May we strive to follow their example and imitate their love for you and our brothers and sisters in Christ. As we prepare for this season and for the Sacrament of Confirmation, we ask that you watch over our team and give us the graces we need to grow in our knowledge and relationship so that we might be a full member of your Church on earth and seek our own sainthood. Bless our families, our coaches and our teammates who are with us through this process. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the saint they have chosen or will choose (perhaps have them do a little research before the next practice) and encourage them to develop their own devotion to saints as a way to grow closer to God and seek intercession when they face difficulties on earth. Close with the following prayer:

- Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

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Winter Sports Preseason Week 2

Theme: Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Saintly Example: St. Ambrose

St. Ambrose likely never intended to be a saint before a series of events led to his unlikely entrance into the very middle of church life. A governor in the Roman Empire, Ambrose lived during a time when the Arian heresy threatened to tear apart the foundations of the Church. The Arian heresy, which questioned the divinity of Christ Himself, was the cause of great conflict. For his part, Ambrose was merely doing his duty to keep order in his region when he stood amidst the Arian and Catholic sides at their election of a new bishop. Yet the crowd unexpectedly turned to Ambrose, with both sides seeming to believe he would be a tolerable bishop for their agendas. Though he had no interest in this position (he even fled for a time) he ultimately took the position. God clearly had a plan though, as Ambrose was already well spoken and well read, a great student of theology and well respected voice by many, including the emperor. The future saint became just what the church at that time needed, a firm voice of support in the truth and one who was so skilled in matters of diplomacy that he not only helped further Church teaching and fight against the heresy, but also helped avoid revolt and military conflict when called upon by Roman power. Ultimately, through his great faith and gifts no-doubt given to him by God and the Holy Spirit, Saint Ambrose became a key figure in the early church and was named a church doctor as a result of his writings left behind.

Discussion:

- The Catholic Church names 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of The Lord. You receive these gifts upon the Sacrament of Confirmation, for in "confirming" what was originally professed at your baptism and being sealed by the Holy Spirit, you enter fully as a disciple in Christ's church. Have you learned about these gifts in classes? How might the Holy Spirit transform you in these ways so as to be a more perfect follower of Christ?
- How might these gifts and an increase in virtue benefit your team as individuals and a whole? How might growing in wisdom or fortitude in reference to God prepare you to meet physical goals and strive for success?

Practice Plan: Continue to encourage the children in their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is a big year for them in their relationship with the Church and the growth of their relationship with God. Let them know you support their preparation and efforts as a coach, affirming the importance of this Sacrament.

Prayer

- Lord, you send down upon us your Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation and bestow upon us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We pray that we might prepare so as to faithfully receive the fullness of graces in this Sacrament so that we can have knowledge of these gifts and live out virtue in our lives. As you prepare us, look with favor upon our team and help us together to grow through our trials at practice and competition in games. Bless our coaches and teammates in all their efforts. Amen.

End of Practice: Continue to encourage the children in preparation for Confirmation and close with a prayer of your team's choosing.

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Winter Sports Preseason Week 3

Theme: Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: Galatians 5: 22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Saintly Example: St. Jude

St. Jude is perhaps best known for his role as the Patron Saint of desperate causes, invoked by many in cases of illness or when seemingly all is lost. However, we should also understand that St. Jude, also called Thaddeus, is one of Christ's initial 12 apostles and served an important role in this holy group of men. In fact, The Letter of Jude can be found as the second to last book in the New Testament (right before Revelation) and encourages the faithful to "build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jud. 1:20). He also speaks of working to win over souls and convert them to Christ. It is believed Jude preached for several years before becoming a martyr for the faith.

Discussion:

- The fruits of the Holy Spirit in church tradition are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity (CCC 1832). How might these bear fruit in your life? At home? At School?
- How might a growth these fruits of the Holy Spirit within us impact your team? Are there any of these particular virtues/fruits that you believe would help your team to pray for and focus on in an effort to grow closer to each other and to God this season?

Practice Plan: The fruits of the Holy Spirit are indicated in the Catechism as "perfections the Holy Spirit forms in us" (CCC 1832). As a coach, how can you help to promote a growth in virtue within your team this year? Are there particular virtues that relate to sports which might help them also to grow personally? Consider how you can help your team by encouraging and speaking about these virtues and the fruits of the Holy Spirit throughout the season.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the many blessings of this day and for our team. Help us to grow in virtue and be open to the Holy Spirit so that in our Confirmation we may be more perfectly formed in the fruits of the Spirit and be drawn closer to you. We pray that in this practice we might use the talents you have given us to the best of our abilities so that in doing so we might glorify you and serve our teammates. Bless our efforts on this day and always. Amen.

End of Practice: Affirm the gifts and talents given to each individual on the team and work to make a positive comment to each about his or her work during practice. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Jude, Pray for us! Amen.

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Winter Sports Preseason Week 4

Theme: Cardinal Virtues

Scripture: Wisdom 8:7

And if any one loves righteousness, her labors are virtues; for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage; nothing in life is more profitable for men than these.

Saintly Example: St. Thomas Aquinas

In his amazing *Summa Theologica*, a large volume of writing on nearly all of Catholic theology, the great St. Thomas Aquinas had much to say about the Cardinal Virtues. These virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude have long been held by Christians to be the core virtues of which all others are grouped around (CCC 1805). The *Summa*, which is broken into a series of sections with questions posed and then answered by Aquinas, is the basis for much of this teaching. Aquinas lists prudence as the first of these. Prudence is the ability to determine the right or good action in a situation and determine how to go about that action. Aquinas notes that this is the most critical because how we reason and act informs all other virtues. He further lists Justice (giving proper due to God and to neighbor), Temperance (balance in the use of goods) and Fortitude (constant pursuit of the good). He contends that all other virtues are "reducible to the above four." Thanks to his considerable amount of work and writing on subject such as the virtues, we have a great deal better understanding of how to live a holy life from this incredible saint.

*Materials from *Summa Theologica*, Question 61 (First Part of the Second Part). Adopted from translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

Discussion:

- How might growth in the Cardinal Virtues help you each day to live a holy life? What examples of situations at school or home can you think of where these virtues would help make better decisions and seek God's will? (Can be general or specific).
- How might growth in these virtues help this team and our performance? Do any of these virtues apply to sports? (Hint: See training in Play Like a Champion program on practical application of Cardinal Virtues in youth sports).

Practice Plan: Refresh your understanding of how the Cardinal Virtues can be used as a model for coaches via the Play Like a Champion workshop and the *GROW* approach. Resolve to take a specific virtue and work on building that as a coach through action at practice. Don't forget to practice all of them through the season.

Prayer

- Lord, thank you for the example of St. Thomas Aquinas and for his teachings on the faith, as well as the teachings of all the saints which help us to know you better. May we seek to understand and practice the Cardinal Virtues so we might grow in all the virtues which flow from these. May we practice these virtues through our action on this team and strive always to be the person you created us to be. Bless and protect us during this practice and in the week to come. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children of the Cardinal Virtues and encourage them to consider these virtues as they seek to grow as persons and athletes. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Jude, Pray for us! Amen.

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Winter Sports Preseason Week 5

Theme: Service

Scripture: Matthew 5: 14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Saintly Example: St. Martha

St. Martha is considered the Patron Saint of servants, for it is her to whom Jesus Himself teaches a valuable lesson in scripture. Though she is referenced multiple times in the gospels, perhaps her most famous reference comes in Luke 10:38. The story goes as follows:

Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

Though Martha is not explicitly wrong to be serving her guests, Christ redirects her purpose by demonstrating that it is better she be focused on Christ and in particular His immediate presence. For her part, Martha clearly listens, as we read of her remaining by Christ's side at various other points in the gospels and she becomes known as a saint. We must remember this as we go about our busy lives, that our goal is to love and serve Christ. While we certainly do this in many ways through serving others, we must always do so with Christ at the heart of this service. May we never pass by prayer or the tabernacle in an effort to keep up with worldly things.

Discussion and Practice Plan:

- Many of you are involved in service projects through your school or other parish activities. What is a way that we as a team can make an act of service this year in order to bring Christ's love to others in our church or community? Is there something we can do during practice or a church ministry we can support through a donation of time or goods? (*Coaches, help drive this conversation with the kids and work with them to find some service the team can do together.)

Prayer

- Almighty God, we praise your holy name and rejoice in the gift of this day, our families, teammates and coaches. We thank you for the gift of participating in this sport, that our bodies are able and our minds challenged by the exercise before us. We thank you for the example of St. Martha and all the saints, as we pray that like them we may one day know the eternal glory of heaven. Bless us on this day with safety in our practice and the will to grow in virtue and follow you always. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Put a plan in place for the service you plan to do as a team and remind the children of the importance of stopping to take time and focus on The Lord each day. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Martha, Pray for us!

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Winter Sports Preseason Week 6

Theme: The Great Commission

Scripture: Matthew 28: 18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Saintly Example: St. Peter

St. Peter plays a large and important role in Christ's ministry and His foundation of the Church. He is among the first disciples chosen by Christ. It is then Peter who calls out to Jesus on the stormy sea and is permitted, for just a moment, to walk toward Christ on the water. It is Peter who speaks out amongst the great commotion of who Jesus is and proclaims that Jesus is the Christ. Then it is Peter to whom Christ refers to as the "rock" on whom He will build His Church (Mt. 16:18), foretelling his role as our first Pope. As Christ enters into His passion it is Peter who denies Him three times and must later be forgiven by Jesus after the Resurrection. Finally it is certainly Peter along with the other apostles to whom Christ speaks the Great Commission (above) and leaves the authority that ultimately forms the Church. We may hear as much about St. Peter as we do any person in the New Testament other than Jesus, and perhaps he is such a beloved saint because we can certainly identify with him. Peter's response isn't always perfect, for he is (lovingly) rebuked at times by Jesus and seems in need of forgiveness more than once. Yet it is precisely his humility in sin, his continual determination to follow our Lord's will, and his courageous acceptance and profession of Jesus as God Made Man that allows him to become a great saint and the rock on which our Catholic Church was built on earth.

Discussion:

- Christ's Great Commission, which we read in scripture today, does not solely apply to the early apostles. It also applies to all of us today, who are called to take the gospel out into the world and win souls for Christ. What are some of the ways you can share Christ's message with others in your life? In what ways can you evangelize to others in your family? Your school? Your teams and activities?
- How can we share this message and proclaim God as a team? How can we witness to Him through our actions and the way we carry ourselves?

Practice Plan: Pay special attention to how your team can be source of leading others to Christ simply by how they speak and act during practices and games. Perhaps you have participants on your team who are students at the school but not Catholic, how can you and the other team members share your faith with them? Consider the ways in which you can help your team to live out God's call for evangelizing and drawing others to Him.

Prayer

- Lord, you give us the example of St. Peter as a great disciple and champion of your Word in the early church. May we imitate his zeal for sharing the gospel with the world and have the courage to win souls for you through our own actions and words. We ask for his intercession and pray that we too may one day become saints. Bless our team on this day and help us to build a foundation this season that is rooted in you. May our efforts in this practice be rewarded and may you protect us against injury. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage the team to "go forth" and win disciples for Christ in their daily lives at home and school. Close with a prayer of the team's choosing.

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Winter Sports Regular Season Week 1

Theme: Nicene Creed

Scripture: John 14:1

"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me."

Saintly Example: St. Athanasius

St. Athanasius was a bishop in the early church, living until the year 373 AD. During that time he played a key role in the Church's fight against the Arian heresy, which questioned the divinity of Christ (that He came from God) and thus attempted to shake the very foundation of the Church. Athanasius was present at the First Council of Nicea in 325, where he assisted his bishop in the council that developed the first forms of what we now recite in the Nicene Creed (though that was not fully developed and adopted until at least the year 381). Later he was named bishop and over the next 46 years until his death he fought diligently for the truth and helped lead the church through a difficult period. He was actually exiled several times as a result of his position and teachings, with many his writings leading to his being called a doctor of the church.

Discussion and Practice Plan:

- Do we understand what we profess in the Nicene Creed? Ask the children about their experience or knowledge of the Creed. The Creed that we recite today was an incredibly important profession of the truth during a time when many in the world were being led down the wrong path. It remains a central part of our Church today, as we profess the very things we believe to all in the world. Encourage the team to consider each line they profess when saying the creed. If they aren't learning about its origins and history in school, encourage them to look it up themselves and learn more about it. As they prepare for Confirmation, it's important to understand the Church to which they belong and the faith which they profess.

Prayer: Recite the Nicene Creed as today's prayer. Do so slowly, considering each phrase as spoken.

- I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage the team members to research the Nicene Creed and to consider its origin as they profess their faith each Sunday at Mass. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Athanasius, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 2

Theme: First Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2041-2042

2041 The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor:

2042 The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor") requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principle liturgical feasts honoring the mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days.

Saintly Example: St. John Chrysostom

The word "Chrysostomos" is a term that translates to "golden-mouth" and was traditionally used to refer to great speakers. Thus St. John Chrysostom is called so because he is most well known for his amazing ability to speak, whether in homilies or otherwise. Alive during a tumultuous period in the early church (as referenced in notes on St. Athanasius and St. Ambrose), St. John Chrysostom was a man not afraid to defend the faith and his homilies often angered those opposed to his clear teachings from the bible and early church tradition. Like St. Athanasius, he was exiled multiple times as Archbishop of Constantinople as a result of his teachings and denouncing the actions of the Emperor's wife. Many of his homilies still exist today, including his Easter Homily, which can be found easily by searching online by his name. Overall, his eloquence and great faith helped him to become a great leader of the early church and a saint known for his ability to win souls through his speech.

Discussion:

- St. John Chrysostom was known for his ability to speak on the faith, to be clear and precise in his teachings while remaining a beautiful speaker. How do we speak of God? Does our daily speech convey our faith and do Him honor? Do we use His name in vain or avoid speaking of him at all? Do we strive to use clean language or do we defile our speech through the use of vulgar language?
- How we communicate is an important part of our team, yet sometimes sports is seen as an excuse to use foul language. Does our speech on the team convey our love of God and our neighbor? Does our speech to teammates, opponents, coaches and officials convey this love? Do our words in competition lead others to Christ or away from Him?

Practice Plan: If you aren't already working on this, make a special effort to "clean up" the language on your team and remind the team members that simply how they speak and what they speak about can lead others closer to God. Work as well on communication within the team from an athletic standpoint, a team that communicates well has a clear advantage in competition. Use St. John Chrysostom as an example of the power of words matching your actions and witnessing your faith.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, may the words we speak always profess our love for you and the praise you so rightly deserve. May our words make known our faith in you and draw others close to you as well. Bless our team in this week as we practice and play, that we may come to grow in our relationship with you and our athletic skill. May we always place you at the center of our efforts and glorify you in all that we do. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team that how they speak is a powerful thing. Close with a prayer of the team's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 3

Theme: Second Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2042

The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year.") ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

Saintly Example: St. Pio of Pietrelcina

St. Pio of Pietrelcina, more popularly known by the name Padre Pio, is a modern saint who lived from 1887-1968. As with all saints, he was a remarkable individual with great faith. Yet what is perhaps most quickly identified about Padre Pio were two distinguishing characteristics: his supernatural gift in the confessional and the stigmata (though it is also said he could bi-locate, a truly unique gift). In confession, it was said St. Pio had the gift of being able to read souls, such that he could tell them their sins even before they confessed and would know if they were holding back a particular sin. He was such a popular confessor that people came from all over to wait in line, where he often heard confessions 10-12 hours a day. Many stories of great healing and conversion came from these hours in the confessional. Still, it is likely the stigmata that elicited even more curiosity, a phenomena that reportedly occurred the first time while hearing confessions in 1918. The stigmata, as it is known, is the visible wounds of Christ's crucifixion on the hands - wounds where Christ was nailed to the cross. Padre Pio received the stigmata after a mystical experience and had the marks along with great pain until his death. The wounds were investigated multiple times and the source of great skepticism, yet no medical professional could find a cause for them, or why they remained fresh wounds for 50 years of his life. As a further sign, the wounds emitted an odor that was said to be sweet and beautiful. When he died in 1968, however, the wounds mysteriously disappeared just as quickly as they came, with no trace of any injury history. This remains a phenomena that few completely understand, but one that has been effectively verified along with other miracles associated with St. Pio in his canonization.

Discussion:

- The second precept of the church above involves the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Do you regularly receive this sacrament? How can receiving this sacrament regularly help you draw closer to God? What graces might come from this great sacrament?

Practice Plan: Find a time when the team can commit to attending confession together. Or better yet, bring confession to the team. Speak with a priest at your parish and ask if he would be willing to come to a practice during the season and hear confessions from team members outside the gym. What an amazing opportunity to receive a sacrament during practice time! Though your priests are busy, you may be surprised at their willingness to do this and their joy in offering this sacrament for the children.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the example of great saints like St. Pio of Pietrelcina. May we have the courage to receive this sacrament regularly so that we can be healed of our sins and increase our virtue as we draw closer to you. Help us to strive always to become saints ourselves. In this practice, help each of us to give our absolute best effort to use the gifts and talents which you have blessed us with. May we glorify you through our practice and play, with our actions and words professing our love for you. We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Work with the team (and priests!) to setup an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. What a beautiful gift from God! Close with a prayer of your team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 4

Theme: Third Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2042

The third precept ("You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season") guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.

Saintly Example: St. Ignatius of Antioch

St. Ignatius of Antioch was a very early bishop in the church, early enough that he was appointed to the position by St. Peter, our first Pope. It is believed he lived until the year 107, when he was martyred in brutal fashion for professing his Christian faith. Yet his life, and the letters he left behind, are a beautiful testament to his steadfast love of Christ and his important role in spreading the gospel in the early church. In fact, we still have the seven letters he wrote on his journey to death, which proudly profess his willingness to die for Christ. In one of his letters, written to the Romans, he wrote: "*Grant me just this privilege of being poured out as an offering to God, while the altar is now prepared; and do you as a choir of love sing praises to the Father in Christ Jesus that he has counted the bishop of Syria worthy to be brought from the land of the sunrise to the sunset. It is good to be setting to the world for God, that I may rise to him*" (courtesy EWTN.com). This beautiful example of faith in God and a willingness to die for him helped Ignatius to convert many souls, even after his death.

Discussion:

- So in love with Christ was St. Ignatius of Antioch that he was willing to go joyfully to a terrible death for refusing to denounce Christianity. What sacrifices are we willing to make for our faith? What worldly possessions are we willing to give up in order to follow Christ?
- How can we work to make sure we place the Eucharist at the center of our lives? Though the church precepts refer only to the minimum, we have the opportunity to receive Christ even daily. Do we seek the Eucharist as often as our lives will allow us to?

Practice Plan: If you haven't already, consider inviting the team to gather and go to Mass together. This could be a weekday Mass (perhaps Saturday morning before a game) or a Saturday Vigil/Sunday Mass. Invite all the families to simply come together and sit together so that you can attend as a team. This is a wonderful way to make the Eucharist a priority and has been a great blessing for teams who have done this before.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the great sacrament of the Eucharist. You humbled yourself to become man and gave yourself for us on the cross; may we seek always to receive you in the most holy gift of the Eucharist so that we might be in communion with you. We thank you also for the great witness of the martyrs, especially St. Ignatius of Antioch, who through their love of you gave their lives. May we strive to be saints and to love you more perfectly each day. Amen.

End of Practice: Work to coordinate a date that will work for the team to attend Mass and close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Ignatius of Antioch, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 5

Theme: Fourth Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2043

The fourth precept ("You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church") ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.

Saintly Example: St. Peter Chrysologus

Like St. John Chrysostom, the term Chrysologus attributed to St. Peter comes from the meaning "golden-worded." This signals his great speaking ability, which also led to his being named a doctor of the church; he is called the "doctor of homilies" (multiple sources). St. Peter lived and was a bishop in Italy during the 5th century. His surviving homilies number 176 and "offer eloquent testimony to the Church's traditional beliefs about Mary's perpetual virginity, the penitential value of Lent, Christ's Eucharistic presence, and the primacy of St. Peter and his successors in the Church" (CNA 7/30/2013). These homilies were helpful in being clear, concise and to-the-point.

Discussion:

- St. Peter Chrysologus is known for his homilies. You have likely heard many homilies at Mass and been exposed to many writings and teachings from saints. What is your favorite? Do you have a homily that you recall at your parish that was particularly memorable?
- The fourth precept of the church involves fasting and abstinence (refraining from eating meat). How can this help us prepare our hearts and minds to receive The Lord on certain feasts or during Easter (after the season of Lent)?

Practice Plan: If this lesson occurs just before or during Lent, remind the kids about the church's rules on fasting and abstinence (primarily no meat on Fridays) and the importance of this teaching from the church. Also, encourage the kids to pay special attention to the priest's homily at their next Mass and consider his teaching about the readings and gospel that day.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for the gift of St. Peter Chrysologus and his teachings, as well as those teachings and homilies from our own priests which help us to draw closer to you. We pray in a special way for our priests, that you may always inspire and guide them in their ministry. We thank you for the gift of our practices and game this week, as we ask that we may have the fortitude to give our best effort and to grow in our skill. Bless our coaches and may you inspire them in their teaching us about you and this game. May we glorify you in all things. Amen.

End of Practice: Close with the following prayer:

- Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 6

Theme: Fifth Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2043

The fifth precept ("You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church") means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.

Saintly Example: St. Joseph

St. Joseph was a faithful man, but he was probably a bit surprised at the turns his life took that placed him as the foster father of our Lord. Betrothed to be married to a young woman named Mary, he suddenly finds out that she is pregnant. Then an angel appears to him and gives him direction to continue with the marriage, assuring him that this child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and is the Son of God. Further, Joseph is called to take care of God's son and His mother by saving them from at least one plot to kill this child. That's probably enough to make anyone confused and fearful. Yet Joseph was not just any man. His unflinching ability to follow this call and care for the two most important individuals in salvation history made him a great saint and the patron of the universal church. We don't know much about St. Joseph outside of these few facts and his occupation as a carpenter, but we do know that God trusted him with this mission and that he remained faithful to God's call. That alone should be enough for us to understand the type of character and virtue Joseph must have had.

Discussion:

- The fifth precept declares that we are to help provide for the material needs of the church (usually through tithing) but we are also called to do much more than that. We are each called to use the talents and gifts that God has given us to provide for our church and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. In what ways have we done this? How can each of us provide for the church through our time, talent and treasure?
- Look at your teammates. In what ways do each of them use their talents to serve this team? Can you pick-out specific gifts each of your teammate has and thank them for sharing that with the team?

Practice Plan: Focus the team on the latter discussion question. This is an excellent opportunity to create really positive feedback and have the children tell each other what they appreciate their teammates bringing to the team. These could be personal characteristics, individual athletic skills, or any trait that they come up with. Facilitate this opportunity and add your own comments so that each child hears at least one positive thing about their talent and gifts from a coach or player.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the example of St. Joseph and ask for his prayers for us, that we may follow his example of love and faithfulness in our devotion to you and our church on earth. We thank you especially on this day for the gift of our teammates and each of their individual gifts which they have contributed to this team. Thank you for their role in this team and for the unique way in which they draw us all closer to you. We thank you for our coaches and for their time and talent as well. May we all use these gifts to glorify you and serve our team today and in the days to come. Amen.

End of Practice: Close by trying to make sure you leave each child with a positive comment about their performance or attitude during practice. Leave practice on a positive note, no matter the success of any particular drills. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. St. Joseph, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 7

Theme: Sanctity of Life

Scripture: Romans 13: 9-10

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The Angel Gabriel

The Angel Gabriel appears in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. We probably most frequently remember Gabriel for the angel's appearance to Mary, for it is here he appears to Mary and tells her that she is with child. His simple greeting "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28) are some of the most powerful words in all of scripture, not just proclaiming the special role of Mary but announcing the very salvation of mankind in the coming of our Lord. The Angel Gabriel continues to clarify that she will conceive by the Holy Spirit and that the child "will be called Holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Gabriel is considered in the tradition of the Church to be one of the Archangels (it never identifies him as this in the Bible). The name Gabriel actually translates to "Man of God."

Discussion:

- When the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary, his very message serves to affirm the dignity of life. For God did not simply come down as a vague or powerful force, but humbled Himself to become man like us. If God thought His creation of Man great enough that He chose to come down and take on our flesh, who are we to treat our fellow man with anything less than complete dignity and love? Yet the world today does not see this truth. What ways can you help protect the sanctity and dignity of all human life? What things are you doing in our parishes and schools to protect life?

Practice Plan: Upholding the dignity of all human life is a core teaching in our Catholic Church and one that is of utmost importance today. Consider ways in which you or members of your team can support the various ministries of your parish and affirm the dignity of life. This is as simple as looking into the options available at the parish (you likely have someone who organizes pro-life events and prayers) and sharing those opportunities with the children on your team. Encourage prayer for this cause as well.

Prayer

- God, you so loved the world that you sent the Son to take on flesh and become man. That as one of us He would die for our sins and rise from the dead so that we might have life eternal. We pray especially today in thanksgiving for the gift of life. We pray in thanksgiving for our own lives, for those of our teammates and coaches, and for all those who uphold the dignity of life each day in our world. Through our prayers, words and actions may we uphold this teaching and help others to understand the sanctity of life. Bless and protect us in this practice and help us to grow closer to you through our experience here. Amen.

End of Practice: Continue to affirm the dignity of human life and consider extending opportunities from the parish to your team members. Pray for an openness to life on your own and close with the following prayer:

- Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 8

Theme: Living Vocations in the World

Scripture: Colossians 3: 5-6

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Saintly Example: St. Agnes

St. Agnes lived in Rome around the year 300 AD, in the very early stages of the church. Much of the government in the Roman Empire at that time was not friendly to Christians, so she was already in danger by her willingness to profess her love for God. As a young woman, St. Agnes had already made a promise to God to remain a virgin and devote her life to Him. At only 13 years old, the governor's son tried to win her over to be his wife. She refused, insisting to him that she had promised herself to God. The governor's son became angry and had her brought to his father on charges of being Christian. The governor tried to win her over for his son, promising her great things if she would deny God and wed his son. Yet Agnes still refused. At this he sentenced her to death, a martyrdom she joyfully accepted. To the end this 13 year old girl remained steadfast in her commitment to God enduring a short life in this world for the glory of eternity with The Lord.

Discussion:

- Recall what it means to discern your vocation in life. How can you go about discerning your vocation as a young man or woman so that you might hear God's call to the married, single or religious life? In what ways can you prepare yourself now for your future spouse - be that God, man or woman?
- Our role at this point in our life is likely to be a student, son/daughter and brother/sister. How can we best live out this role in our lives? What can we do to be even better at each of these roles?

Practice Plan: Encourage the kids to begin discerning their vocation. Simply acknowledging that each child has a special call from God is important. Encourage them to consider where God is calling them and let them know their parish and Archdiocese have more information about religious vocations if they are interested in learning more about those.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for the example of your martyr St. Agnes and her witness to her faith and the vocation to which she was called. We pray that we too might have the courage to listen for your call and to stand firm in our faith, knowing that by listening for your call we might be truly happy. Pour out your blessings upon our team this week and protect us in our practice and play. May we use the gifts you have given us to the best of our ability so that we may glorify you. Amen.

End of Practice: Make it a point to affirm each member of the team before the end of practice, praising them for at least one thing they did during practice or for their contribution to the team. Remember to encourage them to discern their vocation and live life according to God's will. Close with the following prayer, entrusting the team to the care of our Blessed Mother Mary:

- Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. St. Agnes, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Winter Sports Regular Season Week 9

Theme: Church Teachings on Major Issues

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 15-17

For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Saintly Example: St. Albert the Great

Such a great mind was St. Albert the Great that he was actually the teacher and mentor for St. Thomas Aquinas, an amazing man in his own right. Considered the Patron Saint of Scientists, St. Albert was effectively a scientist before the study was known as science. His writings covered a wealth of topics and along with his student St. Thomas Aquinas he is responsible for a great wealth of our modern understanding of theology and church teaching. His study of sciences and even his creation of a laboratory were ahead of his time and contributed to our understanding of the world God created around us. In fact, his many writings were said to be an "encyclopedia" of knowledge by themselves. He was no stranger to debate and defending the teaching of the church, which he did eloquently in his role as a Dominican friar and later a bishop in modern day Germany. He remains a great saint to whom we owe a great deal of our knowledge even centuries after his death in the year 1280.

Discussion:

- Today's scripture implores us to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" and to "live as servants of God." How can we put this advice to use today, when some of the world stands in opposition to long-held church teaching? How can we stand firm in our beliefs while still showing compassion for all our brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we pray for those who do not yet see the beauty of church teaching?

Practice Plan: Encourage your team to always seek truth and to work to understand the fullness of the church's teachings on today's major issues. While it's not your role to educate the team at-large on issues such as abortion, homosexuality or the family issues, you can certainly help point them in the right direction should they wish to learn more. The Archdiocese, CYO Office and your parishes have a wealth of age appropriate materials should you find yourself asked questions by curious teenagers.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of our church: of the first apostles, the great saints, and all the holy men and women who have supported and furthered the Church over the centuries. We thank you for the great wisdom and teachings of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and pray for him in his leadership of the Church. Help us to better understand the fullness of church teachings so that we might be able to defend and honor the great blessing the Church is in our lives. We thank you for the opportunity to participate on this team, for the teaching of our coaches, the support of our families and the contribution of each of our teammates. May you bless each of them, protect them and guide them always. Amen.

End of Practice: Leave each child with a positive comment about his or her contribution to the team. Close practice with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Acknowledgements and Sources

Many thanks go out to all those who were involved in the discussion, creation and implementation surrounding this initiative. In particular a special thanks to the Executive Board of the CYO of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties for their input and approval of this initiative. In addition a thanks to Dr. Kathy O'Hara, Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, both for her discussion and support of this initiative. Further thanks to the Athletic Directors of each CYO parish for their hard work in implementing this program with coaches and teams. A thanks to the Directors of Religious Education and Youth Ministers at various parishes throughout the area with whom I discussed this initiative and bounced ideas off of. Finally a special thanks to Becky Skaggs for her work on editing and formatting these lessons.

The following are sources used for the materials in this publication. With the exception of scripture or where noted otherwise, no materials were quoted nor was content used directly from these materials. Sources were used for themes, ideas or general content regarding lives of the saints. All content herein remains the property of the CYO of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties through creator Peter Piscitello.

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